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SUBJECT: CARDINAL MCCARRICK VISITS LESOTHO: GRANTS CRS GROWING
AUTONOMY

¶1. SUMMARY. During a November 9 call on Ambassador June Carter Perry, Washington-based Cardinal Theodore McCarrick thanked the U.S. Embassy for its work fighting HIV/AIDS and poverty. Cardinal McCarrick, on a week-long visit to Lesotho in connection with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Lesotho's promotion from a satellite office of CRS South Africa into a more independent organization, emphasized CRS's efforts on gender equality, food security, and HIV/AIDS awareness as well as the high-level attention which the Catholic Church's hierarchy places on the Mountain Kingdom. END SUMMARY.

Concerns and Increased Involvement in Lesotho

¶2. On November 9, during a week-long visit to Lesotho, Washington-based Cardinal Theodore McCarrick called on Ambassador June Carter Perry. Cardinal McCarrick, former Archbishop of Washington, was elevated to the College of Cardinals by Pope John Paul II in 2001. Also attending the meeting were Archbishop of Lesotho Bernard Mohlalisi, Bishop Evaristus Thatho Bitsoane, CRS Lesotho's Country Representative John Shumlansky, CRS Regional Director Michele Broemmelsiek, and Poloff. Prior to the meeting, the delegation shared their great concern with Emboffs over the recent robbing and shooting of two members of Lesotho's Roman Catholic clergy, one fatally, in Mazenod, a small town close to Maseru's airport.

¶3. Ambassador Perry held a brief one-on-one session with Cardinal McCarrick. When the Ambassador and Cardinal were joined by the larger group, the Cardinal thanked Ambassador Perry for the Embassy's efforts fighting HIV/AIDS and poverty. The Cardinal mentioned that the Papal Nuncio to South Africa, American James Patrick Green, may visit Lesotho in the near term. The Cardinal, a member of the Board of Directors for Catholic Relief Services (CRS), also stated that his current trip was in connection with the transformation of CRS Lesotho's operations from a subsidiary unit of CRS's South Africa office to an autonomous organization. He offered that this move was due to the quantity and importance of the work that CRS conducts in Lesotho. The Ambassador asked the group if they had heard of difficulties in obtaining anti-retroviral medications by the poor, as she had recently learned in the Maseru District. The CRS delegation confirmed that rural populations had reported similar shortfalls.

Briefing on CRS's Activities

¶4. John Shumlansky, CRS Lesotho's Country Representative, briefed the gathering on three of CRS Lesotho's current initiatives. In the first initiative, aimed at mitigating

discrimination against women in Lesotho, Catholic Relief Services will work with local partners to implement the "Generating New Directions for Empowerment and Rights" (GENDER) project in Qacha's Nek and Maseru over the coming 18 months. The GENDER Project seeks to promote an environment where women's rights are recognized and protected at the national and local level. Mr. Shumlansky then addressed the "Consortium for the Southern Africa Food Security Emergency" (C-SAFE) initiative, in which CRS works with World Vision and CARE to implement a one-year food emergency response program targeting 13,126 vulnerable households in six of Lesotho's districts. CRS's third initiative is to provide Catholic priests, nuns, and church leaders in Lesotho with relevant information about HIV/AIDS to share with their communities and congregations.

15. COMMENT: Cardinal McCarrick's visit to Lesotho is a pat on the back for the team at CRS Lesotho, who have steadily ramped up CRS activities here in the Mountain Kingdom. The autonomy which CRS will now enjoy should help the organization to more effectively adapt its programs to local conditions, in particular the organization's work on mitigating the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Post will follow up on the problem of medicine/service delivery to various areas of the country. Lack of human resources and transportation are likely reasons for this life-threatening shortfall. Combined public/private entities are attempting to expedite supply distribution in-country. END COMMENT.

PERRY